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AUTHOR	Connolly, Andrew
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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the activities, outcomes, and recommendations of a small Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA)-funded teacher professional development project "Teachers First." Noting that the project delivered a program of professional development informed by the recommendations of the DETYA research project "Digital Rhetorics," the paper explains that the project, which commenced in August 1998 and concluded in March 1999, was managed by Australia's Primary English Teaching Association (PETA) with cooperation and assistance from the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSWDET). The report presents information about "Teachers First" and its objectives. "Teachers First" provided 16 primary teachers with professional development in the use of CITs (Communication Information Technologies) and English literacy assessment, and each teacher used this knowledge to undertake a short term classroom based literacy assessment project. CITs were used to communicate with project leaders and fellow participants, access relevant information and resources from the Internet, and record project work digitally on the "Teachers First" Web site. These case studies are attached to the report and are available on the PETA Web site. Contains a 9-item bibliography. (NKA)

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TEACHERS FIRST: FINAL PROJECT REPORT

by Andrew Connolly
National Coordinator Professional Development
Primary English Teaching Association, Sydney and
Mr. Westley Field, education consultant

Paper presented at the ACER Research Conference, October 1999:
Improving Literacy Learning

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TEACHERS FIRST: FINAL PROJECT REPORT

This report summarises the activities, outcomes and recommendations of a small Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) funded teacher professional development project *Teachers First*. The project delivered a program of professional development, informed by the recommendations of the DETYA research project *Digital Rhetorics*. The project was managed by Primary English Teaching Association with cooperation and assistance from the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSWDET). The project commenced in August 1998 and concluded in March 1999.

Teachers First trialed a framework for professional learning placing the real work of the teacher, in this case literacy assessment and teaching, at the centre of the project and provided an authentic context for learning about and using Communication Information Technology (CIT) as an enactment medium.

Teachers First provided sixteen primary teachers with professional development in the use of CITs, and English literacy assessment. Each teacher used this knowledge to undertake a short term classroom based literacy assessment project. CITs were used to communicate with project leaders and fellow participants, access relevant information and resources from the Internet, and record project work digitally on the *Teachers First* website. These case studies are included with this report and will be available on the PETA website.

TEACHERS FIRST OBJECTIVES

- To explore the opportunities afforded by Communication Information Technology as a tool for professional learning for a small group of primary teachers, guided by the 'Teachers First' and 'Workability' *1* Principles identified in the Children's Literacy National Projects (CLP), *Digital Rhetorics*.
- To identify a successful framework for using CITs for the delivery of online professional learning to primary teachers.
- To identify appropriate assessment strategies used by primary teachers of year three classrooms and how this information can be used to plan and support year three students achieve identified English Literacy outcomes.
- To promote primary teachers awareness of the education networking and information services available on the Education Network Australia Directory.
- To promote Primary Connections online learning facility situated on the PETA website.

TEACHERS FIRST DELIVERABLES

- Professional Development to a level of competence and confidence in the use of CITs to enable full participation of those teachers engaged in the project.
- Documentation of Professional Development Materials and Procedures for use when training teachers to use CITs in their own 'personal work', in this case English Literacy outcomes.
- Report Documenting the development and critique of an online professional learning framework informed by the recommendations of the CLP research project, documented in *Digital Rhetorics* leading to a succinct set of recommendations arising from the project.
- Financial Accountability Statement. This statement will provide a comprehensive record of expended funds along with documentation as evidence of expenditure.

1. The Workability Principal as defined in Digital Rhetorics refers to the need to analyse the introduction of new technologies into the classroom with respect to expected improvements in teaching and learning and the associated costs of acquisition and introduction.

TEACHERS FIRST RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Children's Literacy National Projects research *Digital Rhetorics*, funded by DETYA, investigated links between literacy, technology and learning with particular emphasis on the use of new communication information technologies in classrooms. The study was undertaken between September 1995 and December 1997 and had three main components:

- a study of practices in a range of learning contexts, mainly primary and secondary classrooms;
- an examination of some key policy documents concerned with teaching and learning in relation to literacy and technology; and,
- a theoretical and conceptual position which informed the study as a whole and the recommendations based on it.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS FIRST

Digital Rhetorics provided a comprehensive picture and analysis of the professional development context in which *Teachers First* operated. The research brought together literacy and CITs and examined the connections and impact each has on the other. In doing so traditional definitions of literacy were challenged and a broader definition emerged.

> *From a sociocultural perspective, literacy must be be seen in "3D', as having three interlocking dimensions - the operational, the cultural and the critical - which bring together language, meaning and context (Green, 1988,pp.160 -163) An integrated view of literacy in practice and in pedagogy addresses all three dimensions simultaneously; none has any necessary priority over the others. DEETYA 1997, Digital Rhetorics Executive Summary page 16.*

The **Operational dimension** of literacy refers to competence with language. That is the ability to read and write in a range of contexts appropriately and adequately.

The **Cultural dimension** of literacy refers to competence with regard to the meaning system. That is the ability to understand texts in relation to context.

The **Critical dimension** of literacy refers to the socially constructed nature of all human practices and meaning systems. It refers to the need for individuals to not only be able to participate and make meaning within these systems but also be able to recognise how to actively produce and transform these practices.

Implications and recommendations for teacher professional development arising from *Digital Rhetorics* were interpreted as fitting into two overlapping categories. The first category relates to the delivery of teacher professional development and the second relates to content.

The title of the project, *Teachers First*, refers to one of the key principles identified and defined by *Digital Rhetorics*. The principle focuses on the need to provide teachers with opportunities to learn about new technologies and their relationship to language and literacy in the curriculum before being asked to incorporate them into teaching and learning programs. It states that professional learning of teachers in the use of CITs should be ongoing, commencing at the preservice phase and be continuing throughout the teachers' professional life. Delivery of teacher professional development should address the practical use and application of CITs at the same time as focusing on theory and research related to the use of CITs in learning.

> *Teachers need support in making use of new technologies to enhance their personal work before learning to use it in their teaching. For teachers to make sound educational choices about using new technologies in classroom practice, they must first know how to use them (and any benefits of doing so) for their own purposes. DEETYA 1997, Digital Rhetorics Executive Summary page 12.*

Digital Rhetorics reported that the content of teacher professional development should address the following:

- teachers need to understand, and address, the *operational*, *cultural* and *critical* dimensions of literacy;
- professional development needs to enable teachers to deal with learning in the information age;
- teachers need professional development that will enable them to deal appropriately with new technologies as learning media;
- teachers need to be able to find ways to harness 'native' skills, perspective, and capacities to learning;
- professional development should familiarize teachers with cultural apprenticeship models of pedagogy along the lines developed by people like Barbara Rogoff (1990, 1995), Jean Lave (1991) Shirley Brice Heath and Milbrey McLaughlin (1994).

Understandably many of these recommendations were beyond the scope and timeline of a program such as *Teachers First* to address in a comprehensive way, however project implementation took all recommendations into account and each will be highlighted and discussed in the context of this report.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

All teachers participating in *Teachers First* were fulltime employees of the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSWDET). The context in which the project operated therefore necessitated an acknowledgment of local policy initiatives. *Teachers First* was informed by the following NSW Department of Education and Training initiatives:

- State Literacy Strategy
- Basic Skills Test
- Cross Sectorial Assessment and Reporting Project
- English K - 6 Syllabus implementation
- Computers in schools Policy
- Technology in Teaching and Learning implementation and hub group support network.

TEACHERS FIRST IMPLEMENTATION

Sixteen teachers were invited to participate in *Teachers First*. These teachers were from urban and rural NSW DET schools. At the outset it was intended to include only teachers working with students at stage 2 of the NSW English K - 6 Syllabus however due to time constraints two teachers, one working across K - 6 and another teaching at Stage 3 were included. All teachers were identified using the following criteria:

- Full time employee (term 3) of the NSWDET
- Teaching a Stage 2 class
- Interest and expertise in English literacy teaching and learning
- No specific interest or expertise in Communication Information Technology
- Teaching in a school that has email access and Internet access available to teachers
- Access to onsite CIT expertise
- Senior staff supportive of teacher participation

Teachers interested, and specifically skilled in English literacy were targeted as the CLP research project found evidence in site studies, supported by other research in this area, that English teachers are sometimes among the most resistant to using new technologies. Bigum et al, 1987; Durant & Hargraves, 1994; Snyder, 1995 have documented aspects of resistance or "refusal" as it has been labelled. To generalise, there is a tendency to protect what is traditionally regarded as the territory of English, the book and the spoken word. An explicit identification process was required by the NSWDET. Target Districts were identified jointly by DET Officers and PETA Project Manager. This process was undertaken using combined knowledge (of all DETNSW technology and literacy programs) was to ensure equity across schools and districts. District Superintendents were formally approached by letter. This letter included a program description, a draft professional development agenda and a request to identify teachers.

The following NSWDET districts were approached:

- Wollongong District
- Lismore District
- Bathurst District
- Orange District
- Port Macquarie District
- Fairfield District
- Port Jackson District

Schools nominated by District Superintendents were then contacted by Officers of the Training and Development Directorate and requested to nominate two teachers. The eight schools approached all agreed to participate and are listed below.

- Orange Public School Orange District Office
- Goonellabah Public School Lismore District Office
- Port Macquarie Public School, Port Macquarie District Office
- Cabramatta West Public School, Fairfield District Office
- Woonona East Public School, Wollongong District Office
- Waterloo Public School, Port Jackson District Office
- Narrabri West Public School, Moree District Office
- Cameray Public School, Northern Beaches District Office

NSW DET Technology In Learning and Teaching (TILT) program, funded District based TILT hub group facilitators to attend and participate in the two-day face to face professional development held in Sydney. This contribution included two days teacher release, travel and a per diem allowance for each hub group facilitator.

Two TILT hub groups operate in each district to support TILT graduates in on going learning with and about computer and information technology. Hub groups are coordinated by a teacher who has volunteered to facilitate after school meetings across a number of schools. A small amount of funding is allocated to the coordinator's school to support hub group meetings. The NSW DET suggested using the hub group infrastructure to provide support to participants in the *Teachers First* project.

All travel accommodation and meals for teachers traveling from outside of Sydney to attend the program were funded by *Teachers First*. Each teacher was provided four days teacher release. Two days to be used within the induction program and two days to be used to undertake project work at the school site.

TEACHERS FIRST INDUCTION

The two-day induction program took place on Thursday 10th of September and Friday 11th of September 1998 at Sydney University.

INDUCTION CONTENT

The first day of the professional development induction program provided teachers with an overview of the project including context, expectations and outcomes. An overview of the literacy initiatives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training were provided along with a comprehensive examination of the 1998 English K - 6 Syllabus. Teachers were provided with professional development informed by the teacher training processes used within the 1996 National School English Literacy Survey. Teacher professional development focused specifically on:

- the development of an assessment task based on an English literacy Outcome;
- implementation of an assessment task;
- analysis, interpretation and moderation of data obtained from the implementation of an assessment task.

The program included the following components:

- introduction to the NSW English K -6 Syllabus. Senior English Advisor Bernadette Thorn, NSW Department Of Education and Training, Curriculum Directorate.
- overview of the English Literacy assessment and reporting initiatives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training with particular emphasis on the Basic Skills Test. Robyn Mamouney, NSW Department of Education and Training, Assessment and Reporting Unit.
- creating and implementing an authentic assessment task based on the materials and processes of the National Schools English Literacy Survey. Marion Meiers, Australian Council Educational Research.
- outline of the English literacy assessment task to be undertaken during the course of the project.

Assessment Task Outline:

- Choose two linked English literacy outcomes (English K - 6 uses an organising framework of outcomes in the categories of learning to and learning about. The NSW DET recommends teachers link outcomes from the two strands) relevant to a student or group of students in their class.
- Construct an authentic assessment task and marking framework to be used in the classroom.
- Analyse the data collected in this process and use information gained to develop a teaching and learning program to address the needs of the student/s.

- Record work using the online Proforma on the Teachers First website.
- Communicate with other teachers and project leaders using CITs, participate in discussions and search for appropriate teaching and learning resources on the Internet to support your teaching and learning focus. These resources might include those available at the NSW Board of studies online syllabus and support materials collection.

The second day of the professional development induction program provided teachers with an overview of *Digital Rhetorics* including implications for schools and teachers connecting literacy, learning and technology. An overview of the technology policy and initiatives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training linking these relate to the recommendations of *Digital Rhetorics*. Professional Development also provided examples of practical classroom based strategies for using CITs, led by one of the teachers included within the *Digital Rhetorics* research.

The *Teachers First* area housed on the PETA website was introduced and used as the focus to provide teachers with training in the use of specific CITs that would be used during the project. Included on the password protected *Teachers First* area of the PETA website were the teachers case study proformas, a discussion area, and a participant contact list.

The program included the following components:

- overview of Digital Rhetorics implications and recommendations for schools and teachers. This included an explicit focus on the operational, cultural and critical aspects of both literacy and technology. The session also included information about the NSW DET policy response to support learning in the 'information age' Joy Murray Senior Project Officer, New South Wales Department of Education and Training, Training and Development Directorate (Digital Rhetorics co-researcher).
- practical CIT skills including searching, locating, critiquing and using information from the Interent; creating and sending emails; participating in synchronous and asynchronous discussions; registering and creating a personalised online project case study proforma. Westley Field, PETA CIT consultant, Greg Ramsay and Cathy Nielsen NSW Department of Education and Training, Training and Development Directorate.
- CIT as a learning media to be used in the classroom. Focusing on practical teaching and learning strategies that utilise CIT in the classroom. David Smith, NSW Department of Education and Training, Literacy Consultant (Teacher from original Digital Rhetorics research case study).

• commencement of online case study records for *Teachers First*. Teachers created a case study proforma and completed the first four categories of information. Each school was allocated a partner school responsible for responding to emails or discussions posted by their partner. This protocol was established to ensure that all emails and discussions received a response.

TEACHERS FIRST TEACHER TIMELINE

On return to school, teachers commenced work on their individual case studies. A timeline was provided outlining the tasks and timeframes to help teachers plan their time effectively.

WEEK 1
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit the Teachers First area on the PETA website and identify the proforma that you wish to continue using. Send this information to Westley via email. Complete online proforma sections: Context, Teacher Story, English Literacy Outcomes, Assessment Task.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Design Assessment Task and prepare for implementation.

WEEK 2
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit discussion site and respond to any questions or requests posted by other teachers. Post any questions that you may have related to project. Email partner school. Search for resources appropriate to project.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Implement Assessment Task with student/s.

WEEK 3
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit discussion site and respond to any questions or requests posted by other teachers. Post any questions that you may have related to your project. Specifically about the data you have collected. Email partner school. Search for resources appropriate to project. Commence online proforma sections: Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing

Assessment Task. Remember if this is to be useful for another teacher be explicit, detailed, even procedural in writing. Include management strategies, teaching strategies, resources.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Analyse data obtained from the implementation of Assessment Task. Use this information to program for Teaching and Learning. Keep in mind the need to establish ongoing assessment information.

WEEK 4
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit discussion site and respond to any questions or requests posted by other teachers. Post any questions that you may have in relation to your project specifically at this point about programming and assessment. Email partner school. Search for resources appropriate to your project. Continue online proforma sections: Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing Assessment Task.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Implement and continued development of Teaching for Learning program. Gather data via ongoing assessment strategies identified. Use this data to inform Teaching Program.

WEEK 5
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit the discussion site and respond to any questions or requests posted by other teachers. Post any questions that you may have in relation to your project specifically at this point about programming and assessment. Email partner school. Search for resources appropriate to your project. Continue online proforma sections: Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing Assessment Task.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Implement and continued development of Teaching for Learning program. Gather data via ongoing assessment strategies identified. Use this data to inform Teaching Program.

WEEK 6
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit the discussion site and respond to any questions or requests posted by other teachers. Post any questions that you may have in relation to your project specifically at this point about programming and assessment. Email partner school. Search for resources appropriate to your project. Continue online proforma sections: Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing Assessment Task.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Implement and continued development of Teaching for Learning program. Gather data via ongoing assessment strategies identified. Use this data to inform Teaching Program.

WEEK 7
WEBSITE ACTION

Visit the discussion site and respond to any questions or requests posted by other teachers. Post any questions that you may have in relation to your project specifically at this point about programming and assessment. Email partner school. Search for resources appropriate to your project. Continue online proforma sections: Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing Assessment Task.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Implement and continued development of Teaching for Learning program. Gather data via ongoing assessment strategies identified. Use this data to inform Teaching Program.

WEEK 8
WEBSITE ACTION

Revise online proforma sections: Context, Teacher Story, English Literacy Outcomes, Assessment Task, Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing Assessment Task ready for publication.

PLANNING & CLASSROOM ACTION

Complete Teaching for Learning programme. Gather data via ongoing assessment strategies identified for completion of project.

WEEK 9
WEBSITE ACTION

Revise online proforma sections: Context, Teacher Story, English Literacy Outcomes, Assessment Task, Programming Based on this Data & Ongoing Assessment Task ready for publication.

WEEK 10
WEBSITE ACTION

Completed online proforma available for final edit before hardcopy and online publication. Work undertaken on classroom based projects was recorded digitally by teachers via a case study proformas. All proformas were available within a password protected area of the *Teachers First* area on the PETA website.

These proformas were published and available to other project teachers via the use of the password 'teachers first'. This allowed progress to be monitored by all involved in the project. Feedback via individual direct email or contribution to the asynchronous *Teachers First Discussion* was possible. It was also possible for project teachers to include requests for help or suggestions on the *Teachers First Discussion*. A second password was required to edit or write on the proforma, this was known only by the owner and the project leaders.

During this time it was also expected that Project teachers would use the CIT knowledge and skills gained during the induction program to search, locate, critique and use information gained from the Internet to support them to complete their classroom based project.

Insufficient funds were available to ensure a site visit to teach teacher however communication was maintained via email, telephone, and facsimile. The project team of Cathy Nielsen, Westley Field, Greg Ramsay and Andrew Connolly were on call to help. Further support was also provided by TILT Hub Group facilitators in each district. Site visits to Cabrammatta West and Waterloo Public Schools were undertaken by Stephanie Gunn, National Coordinator CLP, Beth Whiting (DETYA) and Andrew Connolly (PETA).

Teachers First Outcomes

- **To explore the opportunities afforded by Communication Information Technology as a tool for professional learning for a small group of primary teachers, guided by the 'Teachers First' and Workability' Principles identified in the NCLP Research Project, *Digital Rhetorics*.**

All objectives and deliverables outlined in the original submission to the Commonwealth were successfully completed by this project. CITs were successfully used as a tool for professional learning with the small group of primary teachers. The delivery of the professional development was guided by the implications of *Digital Rhetorics* within the context of the *Teachers First* Principle. The content component of the professional development and individual teacher case studies were guided by recommendations of *Digital Rheotorics*. Sixteen teachers commenced the project and eleven teachers completed each stage. Three teachers failed to complete their written case study but maintained participation throughout; one teacher took leave in week three and one teacher left the project in week 5 due to illness.

- **To identify appropriate assessment strategies used by primary teachers of year three classrooms and how this information can be used to plan and support year three students achieve identified English Literacy outcomes.**

A range of assessment strategies and tasks were designed, implemented and trialed within the context of this project and most have been documented in the teacher case study section of this report. It must be noted that the *critical* dimension of literacy teaching and learning is not explicitly evidenced within these case studies as most focus on the *operational* and to a lesser extent the *cultural* dimensions of literacy.

This aspect of the teacher case studies have important implications for professional development programs that are informed by or follow *Teachers First*. Within the face to face professional development component of *Teachers First* teachers were provided explicit information about the *operational, cultural* and *critical* dimensions of literacy. This information was included on both day one, in the context of sessions on literacy and literacy assessment and in day two in information about *Digital Rhetorics* and the connections between CITs and associated literacy practices. It is apparent from this project that significantly more explicit direction and support is needed to transfer these understandings into practice.

An examination of teacher case studies reveal that English literacy outcomes identified by teachers as the basis of classroom work directly related to concerns about student acquisition of basic literacy skills ie spelling. Context is an important factor influencing the decisions made by teachers within this project. The majority of teachers were explicitly aware of their student performance on the New South Wales Basic Skills Test and on the first day of face to face professional development a session was devoted to the implications and future directions of this test within the NSW DET.

It emerged that whilst teachers were able to critique the testing instrument and the use to which stakeholders made of the information it supplied, as a group they recognised the need to respond to this information particularly in relation to individual student and school performance. This had important implications on teaching and learning practices and decisions made by these teachers.

The case study work of teachers raised important issues related to the use of "outcome based assessment frameworks" such as the NSW English K - 6 Syllabus. Central to the successful use of these frameworks by teachers are issues of individual teacher judgments. It is not the intention of this project to indicate that teachers are not able to make these judgments but to indicate that many teachers recognise that a process is required to ensure that these judgments are validated within a broader context.

Individual teacher judgment was identified by teachers as they are required to:

- determine the dimension of learning outcomes identified within these frameworks;
- develop reliable and relevant common assessment tasks to provide information about student performance with respect to identified outcomes; and,
- interpret student performance on these tasks with respect to achievement in relation to identified outcomes.

At the outset of this project it was the intended to attempt to address these issues using the successful model developed by the National Schools English Literacy Survey (NSELS). The moderation process central to NSELS was to commence during the face to face professional development program and then transfer into the digital environment using the Discussion area of *Teachers First*. This transfer was not successful and the possible reasons for this are discussed in the following section of this report.

- **To identify a successful framework for using CITs for the delivery of online professional learning to primary teachers.**

The project provided teachers with a combination of face to face professional development and a school site context to continue learning about and using information technology in an ongoing way as an authentic part of their work. In this respect the professional development framework successfully engaged teachers in learning about and using CITs within the context of their own learning and work.

Face to face professional development provided teachers with training and support to read and write in the digital environment in order to: construct and send emails; participate in discussion groups; complete an online record of their classroom project; use browser software to search, locate and retrieve information from the Internet to use in their own work. Back at school they were provided with an authentic and engaging project which required them to practice and consolidate the skills developed in the face to face training. They were supported to understand text and information to the real life contexts in which it was created and received.

The use of CITs following the face to face professional development component of the project was problematic at times. Problem solving and compromise by teachers and project leaders was required to ensure the successful completion of the project. Fragility as outlined in *Digital Rhetorics* impacts and will continue to impact on the use of CITs in the education environment.

In the context of *Digital Rhetorics,* Fragility refers to the complex and integrated nature of classrooms as systems. Points of Fragility in the classroom occur around technical and non-technical aspects of technology. Aspects of technical Fragility include: "...difficulties accessing the internet via the modem; difficulties getting technical support to ensure that things run smoothly."(DETYA Digital Rhetorics, Executive Summary p. 12) Aspects of non-technical Fragility include things such as; "...knowledge and understanding of how to integrate new technologies meaningfully and transparently into learning activities."(DETYA Digital Rhetorics, Executive Summary p. 12)

A basic communication problem emerged in related to the email addresses provided by the NSW DET for use during the project. Some teachers had problems accessing and sending email via these addresses resulting in these teachers using established school email accounts or personal accounts as an alternative. This both frustrated these teachers and influenced the exchange of information.

On many occasions older technologies such as the telephone and facsimile were used either to solve problems or as an alternative means of communication. Many minor problems were able to be solved offsite by providing teachers with step by step instructions over the telephone whilst they operated the computer, others involved simple reminders about procedures, passwords or even in one incident to locate a comma substituted for a stop in a web address. Teachers and the project manager found it difficult to solve more complex CIT problems without the intervention of a knowledgeable expert at the school site. When such a person was present problems were identified and solved quickly. Problems with hardware including servers and software were not able to be solved offsite

and teachers and the project were at the mercy of repair schedules which for many country schools caused lengthy delays.

A CIT problem related to editing and writing on the case study proformas housed on the PETA website. The problem occurred just prior to the completion of the project and had a major impact on many participants. The cause of the problem related to the purpose written software program designed to manage each proforma. It was found that the actual program was corrupted when teachers included a letter in combination with a number without using a separating space or marker ie A3.

It emerged that the alpha numeric combinations by chance duplicated aspects of the programming language or code. This alpha numeric combination was commonly used in case studies as teachers attempted to report student information in confidence. Despite attempts to remedy this situation several incidents continued to occur resulting in many teachers completing their project case studies off line and either emailed or sending them in hard copy format to the project manager.

The discussion area established for this project was not successfully used. The comments received by teachers via evaluations would indicate that important implications about teachers access to CIT hardware, and the allocation of teacher time to do this. Professional development programs following *Teacher First* using a similar framework will need to be mindful of this aspect although the resourcing context continues to change as education systems upgrade CITs to teachers and schools. This outcome of the project therefore has important implications for future delivery but should be informed by the operational context.

The provision of a face to face professional development program at the commencement of the project was valued by participating teachers as evidenced in their evaluations .

> *When people actually interacted on the discussion site it was great because we knew each other through the face to face session in Sydney.*
>
> *The hands-on help was great in the face to face. I do think that an extra day half way through the project may have ironed out problems with the technology and helped encourage individuals to complete their projects.*
>
> *The session focused on uses of technology in the classroom program was excellent.*

Training in the use of CITs was valued by participating teachers as evidenced in their evaluations.

> *Internet training provided me with new skills and understandings. I now feel very comfortable with the Internet- it was a great catalyst to get us going.*
>
> *Made me use email, Internet and writing documents for the Internet.*
>
> *It has been a real start for me and I understand the rationale behind the project. Communicating with all other participants via email was beneficial.*
>
> *More confidence on the Internet and away from pure word processing which is where I have been for years.*
>
> *I am now developing a better classroom learning area on computers because I have had my own confidence lifted.*
>
> *My skills on Internet have improved and I can see ways of using it in the classroom.*
>
> *It was interesting using the Internet. Maybe the proforma could be improved eg. We couldn't set it out the way we wanted, However all things need to be continuously revised.*
>
> *Moved us further along the continuum of understanding and use…*

The inclusion of an authentic task that interested teachers, required a practical application of skill and lead to a practical outcome related to their work was valued by participating teachers as evidenced in their evaluations.

> *It enabled teachers to incorporate technology into their programming and sharing of ideas and problems. The project provided time to effectively implement an assessment task which is informative but time consuming. To have the time to design and implement the task was valuable and programming information was gained. It was great to link into other consultancy support from ELI and Reading Project with this project. The project Officer was always available with required.*
>
> *I've really enjoyed tackling the task that I undertook. The professional development provided me a good grounding to work from.*
>
> *Good. My focus and understanding at this stage has increased.*
>
> *I am far more familiar with the syllabus and have clear understanding of its purpose and rationale.*

I used the assessment task that I was developing.

A specific question was included within teacher evaluation to related to the failure of the Teachers First Discussion site to achieve its intended purpose. The following comments were representative of those received from all teachers.

> *Time constraints at school made it difficult to utilise. Not having access to the Internet in our own classroom was restrictive. Doing this in term four was the wrong time of the year. It should have been done in term one.*
>
> *One problem was accessing the computer at school and the time to do this. Questions on the discussion were not always answered quickly.*
>
> *I feel that the discussion site was not effective in part because of the powerful workloads that we experience. There is no luxury of free time to go to the computer for a chat on spec. Pre set times and dates where we could all meet at once would be far more attractive. This could be done once a fortnight or three weeks.*
>
> *It is a time factor. Most people were involved in annual reports, DSP etc. Not all being available at the same time was a problem.*
>
> *It's hard when as a staff member you don't have an Internet computer on your desk in your classroom.*

Many of the teacher comments relate to Principles of Equity identified by Digital Rhetorics. Equity in this case refers to equitable distribution of resources and expertise between and within schools. Many of the teachers participating in *Teachers First* did not have a networked computer in their class to access the *Teachers First* website, discussion area, and other digital resources.

> **• To promote primary teachers awareness of the education networking and information services available on the Education Network Australia Directory.**
>
> **• To promote Primary Connections online learning facility situated on the PETA website.**

Within the face to face professional development program for *Teachers First* the Primary English Teaching Association website and the facilities it offers were used. Access to the Teachers First project site was also via the Primary English Teaching Association website. Within the face to face professional development

program the Education Network Australia Directory was used as a primary site for teachers to search and locate educational resources on the Internet.

TEACHERS FIRST RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That teacher professional development in communication information technology be authentically linked to the work and interests of the teacher.

2. That teacher professional development in communication information technology not be limited to programs that focus on skill delivery or operational aspects of technology in isolation from the cultural and critical aspects of the teachers work.

3. That teacher professional development in communication information technology be transferred into the teacher's professional context to ensure learning continues after face to face delivery ceases.

4. That teacher professional development in communication information technology be planned and implemented with reference to issues of Complimentarity and Equity. **Complimentarity** referring to the need to introduce new technology tools alongside skills for use. In *Teachers First* new CITs were introduced alongside uses that were an authentic part of their work with students. **Equity** referring to the need for equal access to resources and expertise. In *Teachers First* many teachers indicated via evaluation their frustration at not being able to easily access CITs to carry out there work. Other teachers indicated via their evaluations their frustration at not having adequate expertise onsite.

5. That teacher professional development in communication information technology focus on ensuring that teachers develop understandings and pedagogy that enable them to include the *operational, cultural* and *critical* dimensions of technology and associated literacy practices into the classrooms in which they teach.

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SPOTLIGHT on Assessment TEACHERS

Introduction

Outcomes, indicators, benchmarks, syllabus, profiles, screening, common assessment tasks and testing are all terms which have become more and more familiar to Australian primary school teachers. Each of these terms refers to an aspect of educational assessment and carries a multiplicity of meanings, some positive and some negative depending on the context in which it is used, by whom and for what purpose. However, each of the terms and the connected practices are now an integral part of assessment processes in most Australian classrooms. While public debates take place about system and/or nationwide literacy assessment, teachers are engaged in the daily process of gathering and interpreting information about student achievement pertinent to their teaching and the students in their class.

Assessment is, and has always been an integral part of the planning, teaching, learning and evaluation cycle for teachers. The information they gather supports them to make judgements about what students have learned and how they are progressing in relation to established goals and expectations. Teachers bring to the information they gather and the interpretive process, their understanding of the individual, literacy and learning. They use a range of strategies to collect assessment information, including:

- observing students in classroom learning activities
- observing students at specifically set assessment tasks
- collecting samples of student work that demonstrate a particular aspect of learning and testing (standardised or teacher-designed).

This publication puts both the fundamentals of assessment and the assessment practices of five teachers under the spotlight. These teachers, representative of their peers, demonstrate some of the ways they are currently engaging with the difficult, but essential task of student assessment. Each of the case studies documents processes, strategies and tools used by these teachers. These could be used by other teachers to assist them as they undertake similar processes in their own classrooms. The case studies were not commissioned for this publication but are a product of the PETA/DETYA professional development project Teachers First.

"Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about students' learning. The central purpose of assessment is to provide information on student achievement and progress and set the direction for ongoing teaching and learning".

Department of School Education (1996) Principles for assessment and reporting in NSW Government schools

Primary English Teaching Association
ACN 002 567 075
Laura Street, Newtown, NSW 2042
PO Box 3106, Marrickville, NSW 2204
Tel: (02) 9565 1277 Fax: (02) 9565 1070
email: primeng@peg.apc.org

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Teachers First

Teachers First was a professional development program funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs managed by PETA. The project provided an authentic context for sixteen primary school teachers to learn about using communication information technology as they undertook a classroom-based literacy assessment based project. The complete Teachers First report is available from Stephanie Gunn, National Coordinator, Children's Literacy Projects Clearing House, Mt Gravatt Campus, Griffith University, Nathan Qld 4111.

They are a representative sample of the case studies by the sixteen teachers involved in this project. They focus on literacy assessment of reading, writing and spelling.

All of these case studies are based in New South Wales classrooms and therefore all outcomes included are taken from English K–6 Syllabus (NSW). Teachers reading these case studies in states and territories outside NSW, should refer to their own English Curriculum document or Learning Area Outcomes Framework. Each of these frameworks will be slightly different but will share common purposes and be used by teachers in similar ways. These documents map the territory of English, providing outcomes and indicators staged to represent the increasing complexity of expectations in the various language modes of Reading, Viewing, Writing and Speaking and Listening.

Each of the case studies is accompanied by a reflective statement from the teacher indicating how the particular assessment strategies reflect their beliefs about effective assessment.

The New South Wales English K–6 Syllabus

The English K–6 Syllabus (NSW) is an outcome-based assessment framework underpinned by a functional model of language (see Collerson 1994; Derewianka 1998; 1990) The outcomes and content at each stage are organised into three strands: **Reading, Writing** and **Speaking and Listening**. An explicit focus on grammar and spelling are included within each stage. The stages of schooling referred to within the syllabus refer to the following year grades:

Early Stage 1 — Kindergarten
Stage 1 — Years 1 and 2
Stage 2 — Years 3 and 4
Stage 3 — Years 5 and 6

A marking framework for procedural writing

In this case study Jeanette Cope creates and trials the use of a marking framework to assess procedural writing in her year three class.

In this case study I wanted to investigate how I might assess student achievement against particular syllabus outcomes. I was interested in exploring how I could use *English K–6 Syllabus (NSW)* outcomes and the complex range of indicators to help me to determine if a student is able to demonstrate successful achievement of a particular outcome.

I focused on the procedural text type as students had been taught the structure, and had independently written using this text type in previous classroom work contexts. I interpreted the knowledge, skills and understandings that a student would need to have in order to demonstrate achievement of the following outcomes in relation to a procedural text. I also used the indicators provided which, in the case of WS2.9 (Writing, Stage 2, Outcome 9) involved 32 indicators.

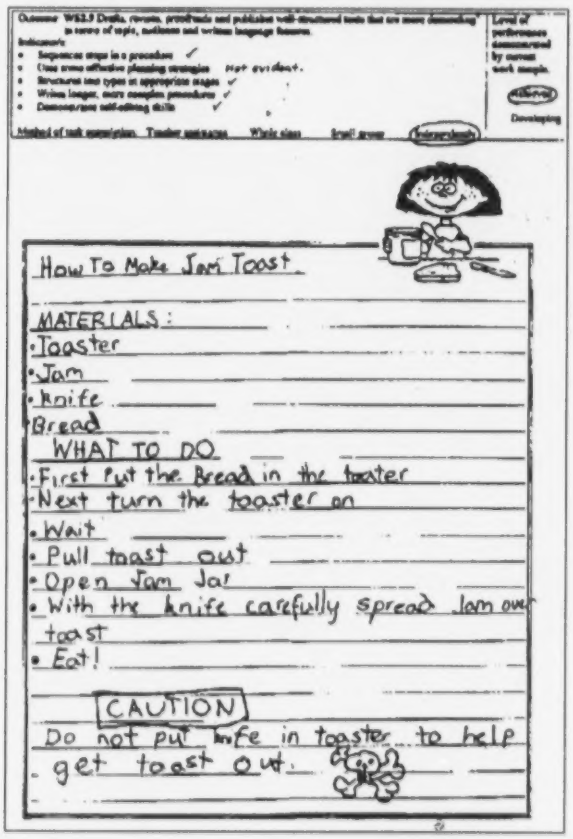
Initially students were asked to complete several pieces of writing, including a procedure. Prior to writing the procedure students were given a model of the text type to read, "How to Catch a Fish", then asked to write their own procedure: "How to make Jam Toast" (fig 1).

WS2.9 Drafts, revises, proof reads and publishes well-structured texts that are more demanding in terms of topic, audience and written language features.
WS2.10 Produces texts clearly, effectively and accurately, using the sentence structure, grammatical features and punctuation conventions of the text type.

In order to assess this task, I created a marking guide similar to those used in marking the trial basic skills writing tasks. I included on this marking guide as many published and personal indicators as I believed would constitute a students' achievement of WS2.9 and WS2.10.

I intended that this writing sample and accompanying marking guide would be kept as a record of the student's progress towards achieving the targeted outcomes, and to help me in planning.

An initial analysis of all students' writing revealed that most children were able to write a well-structured procedural text. From a class of 31 children, three children did not include a goal or aim and four did not include a list of requirements. All children sequenced the steps, although a couple did not use numbering or new lines.



How To Make Jam Toast

MATERIALS:
- Toaster
- Jam
- knife
- Bread

WHAT TO DO
- First put the Bread in the toaster
- Next turn the toaster on
- Wait
- Pull toast out
- Open Jam Jar
- With the knife carefully spread Jam on toast
- Eat!

CAUTION
Do not put knife in toaster to help get toast out.

fig 1

Using the marking guide (fig 2) I was able to assess the children's writing more quickly and accurately as it kept me focused on all the essential elements of the text type, not just the more obvious text level structures. A deeper analysis using the guide revealed that the major difference between student writing samples was to be found in the sentence complexity. Some steps were given in a simple form and did not include adverbs, adverbial phrases or time connectives whilst other samples contained compound or complex sentences, included adverbs, adverbial phrases, time connectives and even included appropriate cautions or safety warnings to the reader.

The marking guide helped me to look beyond the surface elements of the text. Elements such as spelling and handwriting, while important in their own right, did not distract from observations of students understanding and use of the text type; for example, many well-structured, more complex sentences emerged in short pieces of writing containing spelling errors. On previous occasions, before using the marking guide, I focused more heavily on the obvious indicators without deeper text and grammar level analysis of the work. The marking guide therefore helped me to be fairer in assessing each students' achievement in terms of outcomes and indicators.

I intend to modify the marking guide so that it can be used to mark several procedural texts over time. In this way the framework will allow for regular monitoring in a consistent and systematic way thereby showing students' increasing mastery of the text type. It will also be used for assessing writing from other Key Learning Areas, for example, a science or maths procedure, which means less time is needed for added assessment tasks.

Reflection

Effective and informative practice is time efficient and supports teaching and learning by providing constructive feedback to the teacher and student to guide further learning. Assessment tasks may be valid, fair, involve a whole school approach, have clear and direct links with outcomes, value teacher judgement, etc, but is they cannot be put into practice easily and efficiently then effective assessment fails.

Using a marking framework has been effective and efficient for me and I am now working on a set of marking guides for each text type. They will include comprehensive sets of indicators for text process and features at the text, clause and grammar level. Some time will be spent initially on this work but the result will provide a useful assessment tool which will monitor individual student progress in intended teaching and learning activities based on the syllabus outcomes.

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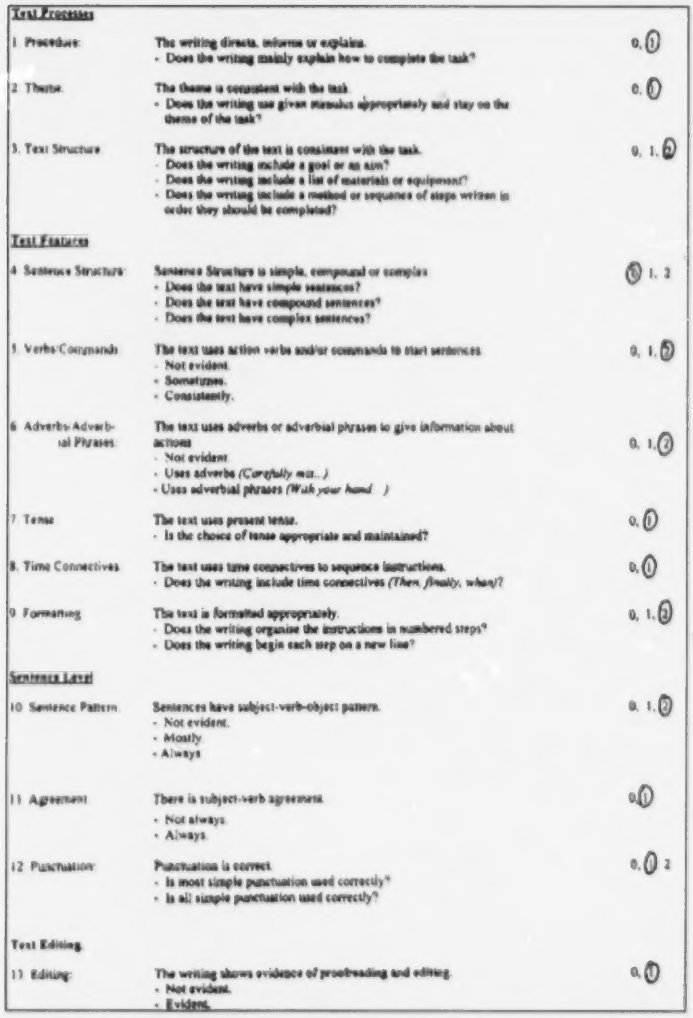

Text Processes

1. Procedure:	The writing directs, informs or explains. - Does the writing mainly explain how to complete the task?	0, (1)
2. Theme:	The theme is consistent with the task. - Does the writing use given stimulus appropriately and stay on the theme of the task?	0, (1)
3. Text Structure:	The structure of the text is consistent with the task. - Does the writing include a goal or an aim? - Does the writing include a list of materials or equipment? - Does the writing include a method or sequence of steps written in order they should be completed?	0, 1, (2)

Text Features

4. Sentence Structure:	Sentence Structure is simple, compound or complex - Does the text have simple sentences? - Does the text have compound sentences? - Does the text have complex sentences?	(0) 1, 2
5. Verbs/Commands:	The text uses action verbs and/or commands to start sentences. - Not evident. - Sometimes. - Consistently.	0, 1, (2)
6. Adverbs/Adverbial Phrases:	The text uses adverbs or adverbial phrases to give information about actions - Not evident - Uses adverbs *(Carefully mix...)* - Uses adverbial phrases *(With your hand...)*	0, 1, (2)
7. Tense:	The text uses present tense. - Is the choice of tense appropriate and maintained?	0, (1)
8. Time Connectives:	The text uses time connectives to sequence instructions. - Does the writing include time connectives *(Then, finally, when)*?	0, (1)
9. Formatting:	The text is formatted appropriately. - Does the writing organise the instructions in numbered steps? - Does the writing begin each step on a new line?	0, 1, (2)

Sentence Level

10. Sentence Pattern:	Sentences have subject-verb-object pattern. - Not evident. - Mostly. - Always.	0, 1, (2)
11. Agreement:	There is subject-verb agreement. - Not always. - Always.	0, (1)
12. Punctuation:	Punctuation is correct. - Is most simple punctuation used correctly? - Is all simple punctuation used correctly?	0, (1) 2

Text Editing

13. Editing:	The writing shows evidence of proofreading and editing. - Not evident. - Evident.	0, (1)

fig 2

Matching students to texts

Matching students to reading materials at a correct instructional level is the purpose of the assessment tasks used with a year 3/4 in this case study by Donna Davies and Chrissy Kostakis

At our school individual teachers develop and use assessment tasks suited to their own individual learning programs. These assessment tasks provide teachers with important information that is used in a variety of ways including but not exclusively matching students to reading material at an appropriate instructional level.

All students are matched to text and work with reading material appropriate to their instructional reading level during guided reading sessions. The teacher's judgment is of prime importance in this process and they are supported to make these decisions through the use of a range of assessment tools. Students are initially assessed using a running record(fig 3) and the relevant stage outcomes and indicators. Running records are administered at least once a term or when a teacher or student feels that he/she is ready to progress to a new level. Students must also accurately answer comprehension questions.

This assessment task is implemented at least once a term, or when the teacher or student feels he/she is ready to progress to a new level. The intention of this review is to ensure that the student's performance is monitored and that teaching and learning practices are continually adjusted to meet their needs. The assessment tasks administered are drawn from the Marrickville Reading Project Benchmark Kit. The Kit contains twenty leveled books, two at each level, running record masters and comprehension questions for each benchmark text.

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Marrickville Reading Project Benchmark Kit, NSW

The Benchmark Kit developed by the Marrickville Reading Project was put together to assist teachers in the assessment of student reading ability. It is designed to be used in conjunction with other methods of assessment and should be adapted to suit individual student and school needs. The Benchmark Kit contains twenty books, two at each level. The levels are E–1, E–2, B–1, B–2, B–3, B–4, F–1, F–2, F–3, and Extension (E = emergent reader; B = beginning reader; F = fluent reader). The kit also contains running record masters and comprehension questions for each benchmark text.

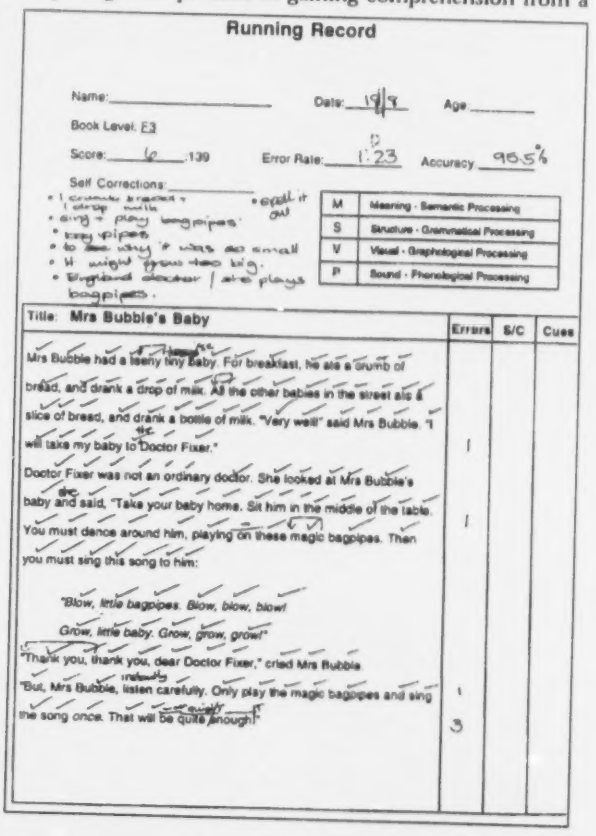
The task was administered to the 21 students in the class. Results show that:

- six students achieved all three outcomes
- thirteen students are working towards achievement of the outcomes
- two students are beginning to demonstrate some aspects of achievement of the outcomes.

Each student has an individual assessment sheet, included in their 'Student Portfolio'. This contains a detailed continuum outlining results for specific indicators. Following analysis of the data collected, the students have been grouped into four levels:

- five students are operating at a B–3 instructional level
- four students are operating at a F–3 instructional level
- four students are operating at an extension instructional level
- eight students are operating beyond extension instructional level.

Further analysis of students running record sheets reveal that modifications in teaching/learning practices were necessary to meet all students' needs within each group. Greater emphasis in guided and shared reading, together with teacher modelling was necessary for the B–3 group. The F–3 and extension groups require a variety of prediction, cloze and shared reading activities to further develop their fluency and word analysis skills. The beyond-extension group have achieved fluency at this stage, however, require greater practice in gaining comprehension from a variety of text types.



Running Record

Name:_____ Date: 19/9 Age _____

Book Level: E3

Score: 16 /139 Error Rate: 1:23 Accuracy 95.5%

Self Corrections: _____

- I drop milk. • spill it ow
- sing = play bagpipes
- key pipes
- to see why it was so small
- it might grow too big.
- England doctor / she plays bagpipes.

M	Meaning - Semantic Processing
S	Structure - Grammatical Processing
V	Visual - Graphological Processing
P	Sound - Phonological Processing

Title: Mrs Bubble's Baby	Errors	S/C	Cues
Mrs Bubble had a teeny tiny baby. For breakfast, he ate a crumb of bread, and drank a drop of milk. All the other babies in the street ate a slice of bread, and drank a bottle of milk. "Very well!" said Mrs Bubble. "I will take my baby to Doctor Fixer."	1		
Doctor Fixer was not an ordinary doctor. She looked at Mrs Bubble's baby and said, "Take your baby home. Sit him in the middle of the table. You must dance around him, playing on these magic bagpipes. Then you must sing this song to him:	1		
"Blow, little bagpipes. Blow, blow, blow! Grow, little baby. Grow, grow, grow!"			
"Thank you, thank you, dear Doctor Fixer," cried Mrs Bubble. "But, Mrs Bubble, listen carefully. Only play the magic bagpipes and sing the song once. That will be quite enough."	1 3		

fig 3

This case study focuses on the implementation and interpretation of Assessment Tasks using the following Outcomes and indicators:

RS2.6 Uses efficiently an integrated range of skills and strategies when reading and interpreting written texts Indicators:

- uses a range of automatic monitoring and self correcting methods when reading
- reads texts aloud, using appropriate stress, pause and intonation
- makes substitutions or omissions that maintain meaning when reading

Reflection

The case study shows how assessment can be integral to teaching and learning and reflect the syllabus outcomes. As stated in the study the task is implemented at least once a term and shows that assessment should be a continuous process, providing direction for further learning which involves the collection of relevant information and the making of judgements. The assessment task is also a part of the student's portfolio and conveys meaningful and useful information to students, parent and teachers.

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Spotlighting Spelling

Maintaining an effective spelling program in a primary classroom based on student needs is a complex and time consuming task. Di Moore demonstrates in this case study how assessment helped her to review her program to more directly target student learning needs.

I chose to focus on spelling as I was concerned that despite learning to spell specific words many students' were not generalising their spelling skills and word knowledge in their writing and across a range of text types. For this investigation, I focused intensively on three children judged to be working toward stage 2 outcomes in spelling to obtain some baseline data on student performance.

I wanted information about spelling skills and strategies used by the three children in order to establish a starting point for my teaching and learning program with the rest of the class. I wanted to determine:

- the effectiveness of children's weekly spelling/dictation testing
- if the children could apply some of their knowledge of sight words, letter patterns and spelling rules to their writing across three text types, ie a factual description, a factual recount and a narrative
- whether the target children could proof read and edit their own writing focusing on spelling.

I made detailed student observations in the following contexts:

1. Weekly dictation test results
2. Joint construction and independent construction of factual description text (eg Write an 'I Spy' description of an animal based on 'I Spy')
3. Joint construction and independent construction of factual recount ('Education Week Combined Schools Sports Day')
4. Joint construction and independent construction of a narrative ('The Strange Loud Noise')
5. Peer testing results
6. Daily diary entries
7. Informal observations of spelling behaviours and more difficult words spelled correctly.

The detailed student observations provided me with information to use for planning my Term 4 unit 'The Sea' and for the spelling focus I would undertake with the whole class as a part of this unit.

To ensure that students focused on spelling in the context of writing I provided opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills about spelling within the context a variety of text types: a recount ('Our Infants Sports Day'), a factual description ('What am I? Sea Creatures'), a narrative innovation on a text ('The Magic Fish') and an information report ('Sea Creatures').

In the context of modelling and joint construction, students were explicitly taught some of the spelling strategies needed to spell successfully in the context of writing. For example, during modelling sessions, I demonstrated re-reading the text, checking for words that 'didn't look right', as well as demonstrating syllabification (breaking up into syllables) of larger unknown words. At the independent stage students were encouraged to continue to proofread and edit their writing demonstrating what they had learned. Independent writing was then compared with the baseline data texts to assess learning.

As the initial observations indicated, students needed explicit demonstrations which were undertaken in order to support students to use classroom print, dictionaries and spelling analogies (eg If I know 'car'; I can spell 'star') were made. I also modelled identifying base words within sound and meaning families when using endings (big, bigger, biggest etc).

The following syllabus outcomes were included:

WS2.14 Learning About Writing — Language Structures and Features
Discusses how own texts have been structured to achieve their purpose and the grammatical features characteristic of the various text types used.

WS2.11 Learning to Write — Skills and Strategies
Uses knowledge of letter-sound correspondences, common letter patterns and a range of strategies to spell familiar and unfamiliar words.

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Dictation Test	12/12 correct (Week 9) 12/12 (Week 10)	12/12 (Week 9) Absent (Week 10).	12/12 (Week 9) 12/12 (Week 10).
'I Spy'	Total errors 0. Words underlined 0. Self-corrected 2 errors.	Total errors 3 (sarts/starts, spuy/spy, volcher/vulture). Words underlined 0. Self-corrections 0.	Total Errors 1 (a-/animal) Words underlined 0. Self-corrections 0.
'Sports Day'	1 error (school/school) 1 word underlined.	Total errors 10 (wene/when, plaed/played, riven/ribbon, wiht/with, kriked/cricket, canivel/carnival, favirite/favourite, Mephem/Meppem, forester/Forrester, hade/had). Words underlined 3 (all correctly identified). Self-corrections 1 (Mus/Mrs).	Total errors 3 (pennit/pennant, canval/carnival, favourrite/favourite) Words underlined 2. Self-corrections 0.
'Strange Loud Noise'	4 errors (croacing/croaking, butturfly/butterfly, clatering/clattering, now/know). Words underlined 0.	Total errors 4 (cocabara/kookaburra, laufing/laughing, crasing/crashing, pan/plane) Words underlined 0. Self-corrections 3. (peopll/people, cating/chating/chatting, buszing/buzzing)	Total errors 2 (puting/putting, was' t/wasn' t) Words underlined 1 (correctly identified). Self-corrections 2 (fie/fire, raoring/roaring).
Peer Testing	All correct. Few sight words as personal words but usually, more difficult interest words.	All correct. Some self-corrections. Often has sight words as personal words.	All correct. No self-corrections. Few sight words as personal words; mostly more difficult, interest words used.
Diary	One or two words underlined. Few errors. Usually underlines difficult words.	Underlines many words (many correct). Omits underlining some easier sight words (eg fore/for, ende/end).	Underlines some words (correctly identified). Omits some easier sight words at times (thises/these, did't/didn' t).
Informal Observations	Uses environmental words to assist. Rarely uses dictionary. Spelled the following words correctly – curly, favourite, groups, flying, growling, grumbling. Has a good visual knowledge of words.	Sometimes uses dictionary and words found within the room. Spelled the following words correctly – tail, team, part, drilling, teaching, school, played, lunch. Writes for meaning and uses visual and sound knowledge. Sometimes neglects to check whether his spelling attempts would sound correct.	Can use a dictionary and environmental print around the room. Spelled the following words correctly – fluffy, grey, relays, goose, town, shouting, digging. A good knowledge of visual appearance of words and some spelling rules.

Reflection

Teacher observations of behaviour and performance in spelling and related written activities (eg diary writing, spelling games, using dictionaries) contributed to a meaningful profile of student achievement in spelling. Teacher testing (eg weekly dictations) and peer testing (student-centred questioning and assessment) were integrated easily into the normal classroom teaching and learning program. Writing samples offered quality information on spelling outcomes as well as clear direct links to other syllabus outcomes. These work samples later became part of each child's presentation portfolio, providing useful evidence when reporting pupil achievement to parents at the end of the year.

The detailed planning of assessment tasks involved finding activities linked to spelling outcomes that integrated easily into the teaching and learning cycle and provided information on individual strengths and weaknesses. The chosen work samples therefore, were from different text types, and provided maximum assessment information by covering a number of syllabus outcomes, saving valuable time. The cooperative planning of the spelling program by the Year 2 teachers, and the continuing development of a school-based standard for syllabus outcomes, have also been very helpful in working towards more effective and informative assessment and reporting practices.

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Spelling activities were included every day, for example

- spelling games
- partner tests
- crosswords
- wordfinds.

Some spelling rules (eg doubling final consonants before adding endings) and strategies (eg mnemonics) were taught to improve students' spelling knowledge.

The children were able to underline most words spelled incorrectly in the writing activities during 'The Sea' unit. Two of the three children were using double consonants when adding 'ing' (eg running, skippying/ skipping) and some quite difficult words were spelled correctly (eg explained, special, backwards, caught). There was evidence that the children were using mnemonics and were self-correcting errors they thought looked incorrect (eg hou/who, haftu/have to, res/raes/races, wached/watched).

As I had made highly focused observation prior to the start of this unit I was able to use this baseline data as a comparison. This revealed that the students had made improvements with regard to the following:

- spelling most high frequency or sight words correctly;
- attempting difficult words with success suggesting visual and grapho-phonic strategies and knowledge are being employed (eg sogaugeroll/ sausage roll, rescces/recess, parrent/parent, dallor/dollar, secnod/second, backword/backward, wasan't/wasn't);
- applying what they had learned to different contexts (undertaken within an analysis of students' diary writing and other written tasks planned within the unit);
- proofreading and editing skills (eg underlining incorrect words and self-corrections).

Comparisons were made between the children's writing at the beginning and at the end of the project. A close examination of words spelled correctly indicated that the children were using some of the strategies they were taught to spell difficult words.

Teaching and Assessing Information Reports

Ensuring that assessment is connected to the teaching and learning program of the classroom is central to effective assessment. In this case study, Terrie Heffernan elaborates on the very clear connection between teaching, learning and assessment in her year 1 class.

Students in my year 1 class are working at different stages of the English K–6 Syllabus (NSW), ranging from early stage 1 through to the end of stage 1. I have linked my learning activities and assessment tasks to the theme of 'The Sea', focusing on reading and writing information reports. A writing criteria for information reports based on the Basic Skills Writing Task was developed for stage 1 and was used as part of the assessment task.

The assessment task I used was planned prior to the start of the unit. It required students to write an information report independently on either octopus, sharks or whales. The information that students might include in these reports was to be drawn from their existing knowledge, information gained during the unit, class big books written during the unit, as well as information worksheets accompanying unit activities. Students were also given a report scaffold to help them organise their information. Once this summative assessment task was in place, it was time to get on with the teaching and learning component.

The teaching and learning activities that follow highlight a teaching sequence for the information text type and do not include other content-based teaching and learning activities. Students were given an assortment of picture books, both literary and factual. They were asked to classify them according to whether they were literary or factual texts. Next, I read a selection of factual texts to the class and isolated relevant information about the sea. This lead to a lesson on information reports and purpose.

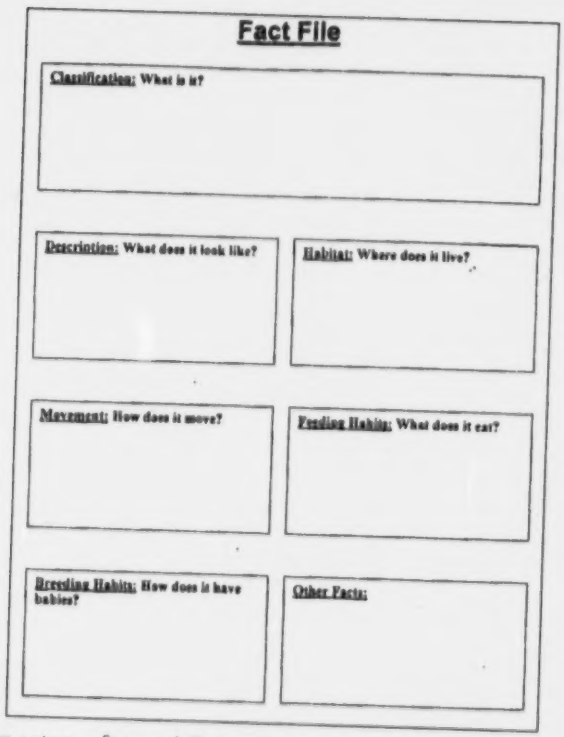
Fact File
Classification: What is it?
Description: What does it look like?
Habitat: Where does it live?
Movement: How does it move?
Feeding Habits: What does it eat?
Breeding Habits: How does it have babies?
Other Facts:

fig 4

I used a big book about an octopus for modelled reading and explicitly identified the facts. I directed students to discuss these facts and followed with a cloze activity based on the big book. This activity was designed so that students would be supported to identify statements of fact. Later, we collected the facts we had about the octopus and organised them into 'bundles' of information. We examined the

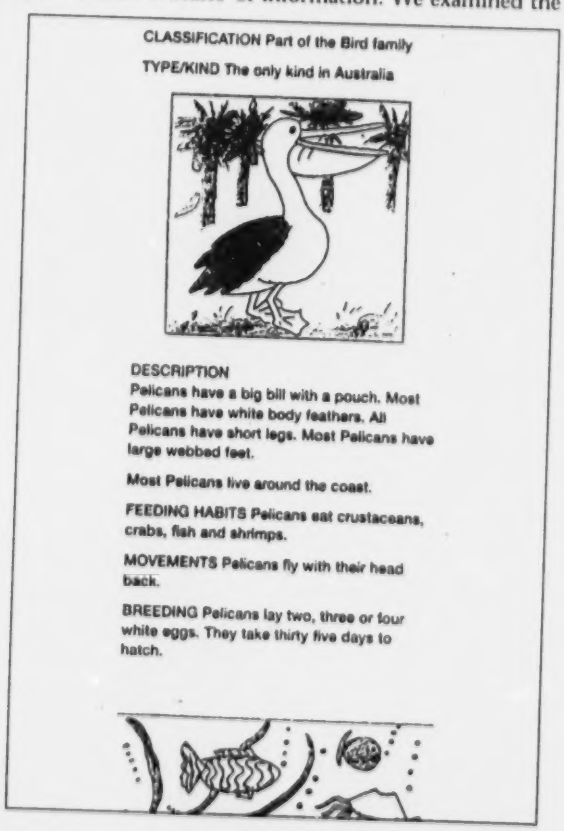
CLASSIFICATION Part of the Bird family
TYPE/KIND The only kind in Australia
DESCRIPTION
Pelicans have a big bill with a pouch. Most Pelicans have white body feathers. All Pelicans have short legs. Most Pelicans have large webbed feet.
Most Pelicans live around the coast.
FEEDING HABITS Pelicans eat crustaceans, crabs, fish and shrimps.
MOVEMENTS Pelicans fly with their head back.
BREEDING Pelicans lay two, three or four white eggs. They take thirty five days to hatch.

fig 5

The following outcomes and indicators were selected from the syllabus to include in this case study. Learning to read and write are highly connected processes, particularly in an early childhood classroom and so I have included a linked reading outcome:

Producing Texts WS1.9: Plans, reviews and produces a small range of simple literary and factual texts for a variety of purposes on familiar topics for known readers.

- combines ideas, using descriptive and technical language to inform.
- writes elementary descriptive information reports.
- reads own writing to teacher or peers.
- begins to explore less familiar topics as a basis for writing activities
- uses drawings to accompany texts.

Skills and Strategies WS1.10: Produces texts using the basic grammatical features and punctuation conventions of the text type.

- uses adjectives to provide more information about nouns
- uses tense consistently
- uses relating verbs to describe and classify features
- uses action verbs to describe behaviours
- uses most common punctuation marks
- uses capital letters and full stops.

Linked to Reading outcome RS1.8: Identifies the text structure and basic grammatical features of a limited range of text types.

structures and features of the information report text type using joint deconstruction. I focused students' attention on grammar of action, relating verbs and describing words. I wrote and organised the information we had discovered in our exploration of the text into a fact file (fig 4).

Students then participated in the joint construction of a 'big book information report' about 'The Octopus'. We used the facts identified, organised and recorded in our fact file. During follow-up modelled reading sessions, I used this information report to support students to identify text type features.

'The Pelican Report' was read in a modelled reading session (fig 5). Children discussed the structure of the text, and identified the action and relating verbs and the adjectives. Students worked together to reconstruct the text from sentence strips using their knowledge of the structure. In modelled reading, we looked at two information reports with their titles hidden. Based on some topic words, students were asked to identify 'what the report was about' and 'what was its purpose?

The same procedures were followed using texts on whales and sharks. Students read about the topic, deconstructed information reports, worked collaboratively in guided writing sessions and independently constructed information reports using scaffolds to support their writing.

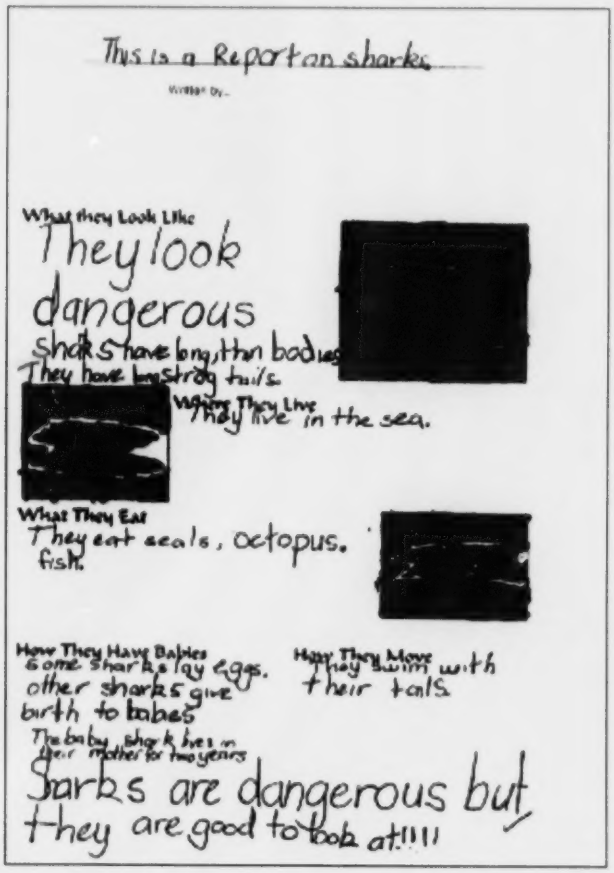
This is a Report on sharks
What they Look Like
They look dangerous
What They Eat
They eat seals, octopus. fish.
How They Have Babies
Some sharks lay eggs. other sharks give birth to babes
How They Move
They swim with their tails
Sharks are dangerous but they are good to look at!!!!

fig 6

A Six Thinking Hats activity was incorporated into the task at this stage. Students were asked to think about whales using the six hats: white hat for facts, black hats for problems we might have with whales, yellow hat for how whales are beneficial, red hat for how we feel about whales, green hat for what might happen to whales in the future and blue hat for self evaluation while working on this task.

At the conclusion of these teaching and learning activities students' knowledge and understandings were assessed using the planned writing task. Some children needed

Reflection

When developing my program for this unit of work I selected those outcomes and relevant indicators for which there was a demonstrated need for further teaching. The teaching and learning activities were designed to be the building blocks on which the assessment task would be based. There was a clear, direct link with outcomes, with my main focus being on RS1.8, WS1.9 and WS1.10. Teaching and learning activities were designed to demonstrate the indicators of achievement explicitly. I used modelled reading and modelled writing lessons to teach these points systematically.

We examined the structure of information reports (RS1.8), deconstructing it in modelled reading and jointly constructing it in modelled writing (WS1.9). We identified and discussed describing adjectives and action verbs used in our reading (RS1.8) and then applied this knowledge to our writing (WS1.10). When assessing achievements on the individually constructed information reports it was these indicators that were assessed. The student work sample was integral to teaching and learning.

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Writing Assessment: Stage 1 INFORMATION REPORT

Name: Date:

CONTEXT:
Children had read various Information Reports and jointly constructed them with the teacher. They had been involved in locating information, organising it into appropriate bundles and writing big books, using this information. They were then asked to independently write an information report using these big books as a source of information. They were given a scaffold to help them format their report correctly.

I want you to notice how I _____

_____

Next time I will _____

_____

signed _____

OUTCOMES:

WS1.9: Plans, reviews and produces a small range of simple literary and factual texts for a variety of purposes on familiar topics for known readers.

1 2 3 4 * combines ideas, using descriptive and technical language to inform (6)
1 2 3 4 * writes elementary descriptive information reports (Score)
1 2 3 4 * reads own writing to teacher or peers
1 2 3 4 * begins to explore less familiar topics as a basis for writing activities
1 2 3 4 * uses drawings to accompany texts

WS1.10: Produces texts using the basic grammatical features and punctuation conventions of the text type.

1 2 3 4 * uses adjectives to provide more information about nouns (6)
1 2 3 4 * uses tense consistently (6)
1 2 3 4 * uses relating verbs to describe and classify features (7)
1 2 3 4 * uses action verbs to describe behaviours (7)
1 2 3 4 * uses most common punctuation marks (11)
1 2 3 4 * uses capital letters and full stops (11)

WS1.11: Uses knowledge of sight words and letter-sound correspondences and a variety of strategies to spell familiar words.

1 2 3 4 * draws on knowledge of sight words & high frequency words (12)
1 2 3 4 * draws on knowledge of common letter patterns & letter-sound correspondence (12)

WS1.12: Produces texts using letters of consistent size and slope in NSW Foundation style and using computer technology.

1 2 3 4 * forms letters correctly
1 2 3 4 * tries to write clearly in straight lines
1 2 3 4 * uses letters of consistent size

WS1.13: Identifies how own texts differ according to their purpose, audience and subject matter.

1 2 3 4 * discusses some of the purpose for which people write
1 2 3 4 * examines stages of a text and discusses their functions (3)
1 2 3 4 * selects and refines topic before writing

1-not evident
2-beginning
3-developing
4-mastered

fig 7

help to construct the first draft of their report, whilst other students constructed it independently (fig 6). Following proof reading and editing the reports we published the reports together and added illustrations.

I established criteria in order to assess the students' writing achievements in comparison to the outcomes identified for this unit of work (fig 7 & 8). The criteria were drawn from the syllabus outcomes and indicators. The structure of the marking criteria were modelled on the Basic Skills Writing Tasks Criteria.

fig 8

NAME: **DATE:** **REPORT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1**

TEXT PROCESSES

1.REPORTS: 1,0
*The writing mainly reports

2. THEME: 1,0
*The theme is consistent with the task

3. TEXT STRUCTURE: 3,2,1,0
Each of these aspects of the text should be awarded one mark.
*An introductory identification or classification
*An organised description of facts
* A statement of closure or summary
*Unorganised or not sequential 0 marks

TEXT FEATURES

4. SENTENCE STRUCTURE 3,2,1,0
Sentence structure is compound or simple.
*If writing shows more than two compound sentences, using differing conjunctions 3 marks.
*If the writing shows the use of at least one compound sentence and simple sentences 2 marks
*If only simple sentences are used 1 mark
*No correct simple sentences 0 marks

5. FORMATTING 2,1,0
*If information has been organised in paragraphs beginning with a topic sentence 2 marks
*If information organised in paragraphs/bundles 1 mark
*If information not organised 0 marks

6. LANGUAGE 3, 2,1,0
The text uses descriptive and technical language (subject specific terms in context).
*If both levels of language are used 3 marks
*If noun groups and single adjectives are used 2 marks
*If only single adjectives are used 1 marks
*No adjectives used at all 0 marks

7. VERBS 2, 1, 0
Action verbs describing behaviours and relating verbs describing features.
*If action verbs and relating verbs are used correctly 2 marks
*If there is some correct use of action and relating verbs 1 mark
*Little correct use of these verbs 0 marks

8. TENSE 2,1,0
Tense is appropriate and consistent
*Use of timeless present tense is consistent 2 marks
*Use of timeless present tense is inconsistent at any point 1 mark
*Tense is inconsistent on more than one occasion 0 marks

SENTENCE LEVEL

9 SENTENCE PATTERN: 2,1,0
Sentences have a subject, a verb and an object.
*If sentences are always constructed with a subject, a main finite verb and an object 2 marks
*If they are mostly constructed this way 1 mark
*If there are obvious inconsistencies 0 marks

10. AGREEMENT: 2,1,0
Subject-verb agreement. Does the form of the verb match the subject in person and number?
*If subject and verb always agree 2 marks
*If subject-verb disagree at any one point 1 mark
*Inconsistencies in agreement 0 marks

11. PUNCTUATION: 3,2,1,0
Sentence punctuation and other simple punctuation must be correct.
*If extension punctuation such as colon/ses are used correctly 3 marks
*Always uses capital letters for proper nouns and sentence beginnings and full stops. Has not used capital letters inappropriately 2 marks
*If capital letters and full stops are used some of the time 1 mark
*If simple punctuation is poor 0 marks

WORD LEVEL

12. SPELLING 3,2,1,0
*Spelling of most words with more difficult patterns are spelt correctly 3 marks
*Spelling of two syllable and long vowels is mainly correct, there are good approximations of more difficult words and successful attempts have been made to use "Have A Go" method 2 marks
*If most high frequency words with simple spelling patterns are correct 1 mark
*If only some high frequency words are correct and simple spelling patterns are incorrect 0 marks

TP 1.	TP 2.	TP 3.	TF 4.	TF 5.	TF 6.	TF 7.	TF 8.	SL 9.	SL 10.	SL 11.	SL 12.
0 1	0 1	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2	0 1 2 3	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3

Some assessment principles

Effective and informative assessment and reporting practice:

- *has clear links with outcomes*
- *is integral to teaching and learning*
- *is balanced, comprehensive and varied*
- *is valid*
- *is fair*
- *engages the learner*
- *values teacher judgement*
- *is time efficient and manageable*
- *recognises individual achievement and progress*
- *involves a whole school approach*
- *actively involves parents*
- *conveys meaningful and useful information*

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Further reading

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